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**The Effects of Perceived Organizational Support, Perceived Supervisor Support and Intra-Organizational Network Resources on Turnover Intentions: A Study of Chinese Employees in Multinational Organizations**

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# **The Effects of Perceived Organizational Support, Perceived Supervisor Support and Intra-Organizational Network Resources on Turnover Intentions: A Study of Chinese Employees in Multinational Organizations**

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of perceived organizational support (POS), perceived supervisor support (PSS) and intra-organizational network resources on the turnover intentions of the Chinese employees of multinational enterprises. The study utilized structured equation modeling to analyze survey data from 437 Chinese employees of five multinational enterprises operating in the Chinese service sector. The study found that POS was positively related to affective organizational commitment, which in turn was negatively related to turnover intentions. A direct relationship was revealed between PSS and turnover intentions, as well as a mediated relationship through POS. In contrast, the relationship between intra-organizational network resources and turnover intentions was fully mediated through POS. The implications for research and practice are discussed.

**Keywords** Perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, intra-organizational network resources, turnover intentions, China.

## **Introduction**

Until China embarked on its policy of opening-up and reform, its economy was characterised by low levels of labour turnover, as a result of lifetime employment in the state sector (Warner, 1995). However, turnover has increased in recent years as a consequence of reforms introduced to liberalise the labour market, and has become a significant problem for multinational enterprises operating in China (Gamble and Huang, 2008). Staff turnover rates are relatively high compared to those of mature economies, at between ten to fifteen percent of the workforce (Leininger, 2007). This phenomenon has resulted from a shortage of skilled employees, especially at low to mid level managerial level, and intense competition for their skills from domestic and foreign-invested enterprises (Wong et al., 2001; Hulme, 2006). The costs associated with turnover are significant for multinational enterprises. In addition to losing productive employees, they have to finance the recruitment and training of their replacements.

The antecedents of voluntary employee turnover have been one of the most widely studied subjects in organizational research. The continued interest in this topic results from the fact that voluntary turnover can be extremely damaging and costly for organizations (Gamble and Huang, 2008). To reduce the costs of turnover it is important for organizations to develop effective methods of employee retention. A growing body of literature, based on the social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity, has begun to recognise the importance of relational inducements such as work-related support from the organization, supervisor and other employees in turnover decisions (Maertz et al., 2007). Empirical research primarily conducted in Western settings confirms a strong positive relationship between perceived work-related support and organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment, turnover intentions and turnover behaviour (Rhoades et al., 2001; Eisenberger et al., 2002; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002, Bozionelos, 2008). Despite a great deal of research investigating the impact of work-related support on turnover decisions in the West (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Shore and Tetrick, 1991; Shore and Wayne, 1993; Jones et al., 1995; Hutchison and Garstka, 1996; Settoon et al., 1996; Rhoades et al., 2001; Rhoades and Eisenburger, 2002, Maertz et al., 2007) limited research has been conducted in China. Accordingly, we conduct this study to examine the processes by which workplace support from supervisors and co-workers influence employee turnover intentions, using a sample of employees from multinationals operating in the Chinese service sector. We seek to establish whether the social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity, developed to explain the attitudinal responses of employees to employer inducements in Western settings, are also applicable in the Chinese context, given significant cultural differences. Compared to the West Chinese culture places greater emphasis on personal relationships (known in Chinese as “guanxi”), stressing loyalty to a person rather than loyalty to an institution (Cheng et al., 2003; Chan et al., 2006). Additionally it is characterised by high levels of power/distance compared to Western countries, reflected in the hierarchical nature of Chinese organizations (Sparrow and Wu, 1998). This brings us to question whether the processes by which support from supervisors and other members of the organization impact on turnover decisions are similar to those in the West.

Two main research questions are addressed in this study. Firstly, the processes by which perceived supervisor support (PSS) influences the turnover intentions of Chinese employees are examined. To this end we investigate whether PSS has a direct influence on turnover intentions and/or whether its effects are mediated by perceived organizational support (POS). Secondly the influence of intra-organizational network

resources on turnover intentions is examined. In recent years a growing body of work has examined the role played by co-workers in the provision of network resources to other employees in the organization (Bozionelos, 2003; Bozionelos and Wang, 2006; Bozionelos, 2008). However, there has been limited work on the relationship between intra-organization network resources and turnover intentions. Accordingly we seek to establish the processes by which the intra-organizational network resources of Chinese employees influence their intentions to turnover. Specifically we examine whether network resources directly affect turnover intentions and/or whether their effects are mediated via POS.

The findings of this study will have important managerial implications. They will enable multinational enterprises operating in China to understand which types of support are influential in developing the organizational commitment and reducing the turnover intentions of their employees.

## **Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### **The Effects of Perceived Organizational Support on Turnover Intentions**

Eisenberger et al. (1986) propose that in order to assess the willingness of the organization to reward their efforts employees generate perceptions as to the extent to which the organization cares about their well-being and values their contribution, which they label as perceived organizational support (POS). Under the tenets of social exchange theory we might expect POS to be positively to organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Wayne et al., 1997; Rhoades et al., 2001). The social exchange theory maintains that individuals enter into relationships with others to maximise their benefits (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974). The resources exchanged between partners may be impersonal, that is, benefits whose value does not depend on the identity of the sender as, for example, the provision of information or money (Foa and Foa, 1974). Resources may be also socio-emotional, such as the communication of caring and respect. Social exchange theory highlights the importance of understanding employees' motivation and its relation to the achievement of organizational goals.

The provision of organizational support to an employee is likely to generate feelings of goodwill towards the organization, strengthening the bond between employer and employee, which, in turn, increases the feelings of obligation to repay the organization, through the norm of reciprocity (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Maertz et al., 2007). Consequently, POS should be positively related to affective organizational commitment and negatively related to turnover intentions. Recent studies confirm this relationship empirically in Western settings (Bozionelos, 2007; Maertz et al., 2007; Rhoades et al., 2001; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Wayne et al., 1997). For example Rhoades et al. (2001) and Maertz et al. (2007) find a negative relationship between POS and turnover intentions mediated by affective commitment.

Despite growing empirical work on the relationship between POS and turnover intentions in the West, limited attention has been paid to this topic in the Chinese literature. In recent years a growing number of studies have examined the effects of POS on organizational outcomes (Chan et al., 2006; Farh et al., 2007). Chen et al., (2005) confirm a strong relationship between POS and organizational outcomes mediated by trust in organization and organization-based self-esteem. Farh et al. (2007) find strong relationships between POS and a number of organizational outcomes including affective organizational commitment and job performance. These studies provide initial support for the applicability of the social exchange theory, and

norm of reciprocity, to the Chinese organizational context. This is in line with previous work which highlights reciprocity (or “Pao” in Chinese) as an important concept in traditional Chinese culture (Wong et al., 2001). This concept has been shown to significantly influence the behaviour and attitudes of Chinese people (Chang and Holt, 1999). When one has benefitted from the good deeds of another there is an expectation that the favour will be paid back sometime in the future.

In line with the findings from previous research in Western settings and our understanding of Chinese culture, we would expect to see evidence of a strong relationship between POS and turnover intentions, mediated by affective organizational commitment leading us to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: POS effects on turnover intentions will be mediated by affective commitment.

### **The Effects of Perceived Supervisor Support on Turnover Intentions**

The literature suggests that employees develop general views concerning the degree to which their supervisors care about their well-being and value their contributions towards the organization, called perceived supervisor support or PSS (Maertz et al., 2007). PSS has gained increasing attention in the literature and found to be significantly related to important organizational outcomes such as employee turnover and turnover intentions (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Maertz et al., 2007).

Existing studies overwhelmingly report a significantly positive relationship between PSS and POS (Hutchinson, 1997; Yoon and Lim, 1999; Yoon and Thye, 2000; Rhoades et al. 2001; Eisenberger et al., 2002). According to Levinson (1965) beneficial treatment received from a supervisor should increase POS to the extent that such behaviour is attributable to the organization. Employees view the orientation of their supervisor towards them as an indication of organizational support, as supervisors are agents of the organization and responsible for directing and evaluating the performance of their subordinates (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Employee association of PSS with POS is also strengthened by the fact that supervisor evaluation of subordinates is usually conveyed to the senior management of the organization and influences the views of management towards their employees (Eisenburger et al., 2002).

However, there is controversy in the literature as to the relationship between and POS. One stream of literature suggests that PSS effects on organizational outcomes, such as affective commitment and employee turnover intentions, are fully mediated by POS (Eisenburger et al., 2002; Rhoades et al., 2001). Eisenburger et al. (2002) find that POS fully mediates the relationship between PSS and turnover. Rhoades et al. (2001) supports their view, finding that the effects of PSS on affective commitment were fully mediated through PSS. Another stream of literature suggests that supervisor level constructs such as PSS might have direct as well as mediated effects on organizational outcomes such as turnover intentions (Becker, 1992; Maertz et al., 2002; Maertz et al., 2007). Organizational theorists argue that employees are able to distinguish their relations with their immediate supervisor from their relations with the organization itself (Becker, 1992). Other empirical work indicates that supervisor level constructs are able to explain significant variance in turnover intentions and behaviour beyond organizational commitment effects (Maertz et al., 2007). Maertz et al. (2007) demonstrate that PSS has direct effects on turnover intentions as well as mediated effects through POS. Their findings strongly suggest that PSS should cause attachments towards the supervisor as well as to the organization.

Researchers are paying increasing attention to the nature of the superior/subordinate relationship in the Chinese context (Hui et al., 2004). Interpersonal relationships between superiors and superiors are considered to be one of the most important characteristics of Chinese organizations due to the hierarchical nature of Chinese society which stresses respect for seniority. Recent work suggests that Chinese employees view their supervisors as distinct commitment foci and tend to exhibit greater loyalty towards them than the organization (Chen et al., 2002; Chan et al., 2006). This is because loyalty to a person, rather than commitment to a system, is said to be of greater importance to Chinese employees (Redding, 1990). Indeed loyalty to supervisor has been found to have greater effects on employee performance than organizational commitment (Chen et al., 2002). The above literature leads us to believe that in China PSS will have direct effects on employee turnover intentions as well as a mediated effect via POS resulting in the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: POS mediates the relationship between PSS and TI

Hypothesis 2b: PSS is positively related to TI

### **The Effects of Network Resources on Turnover Intentions**

A growing amount of research has highlighted how the network resources inherent in webs of informal relationships between individuals, known in Chinese as “guanxi”, are a distinct feature of Chinese business culture and an important influence on the working lives of Chinese people (Tsang, 1998; Su and Littlefield, 2001). In an organizational setting such resources have been found to have a positive influence on their career success and individual performance (Bu and Roy, 2005; Bozionelos and Wang, 2006). Compared to Westerners, the Chinese place greater emphasis on building and maintaining interpersonal relationships with other members of their social group (Wheaton, 1999). Such relationships create obligations on both parties to maintain the relationship through the continuing exchange of favours, resulting from an implicit reciprocity norm. On receiving a favour one is expected to reciprocate by paying back the favour in the future. Thus, a strong, mutually obligating relationship between the two parties is created over time.

The literature distinguishes between two distinct types of intra-organizational network resources: those of an instrumental and those of an expressive nature (Bozionelos, 2003; Bozionelos and Wang, 2006; Bozionelos, 2008). Instrumental network resources have been defined supportive relationships with senior members of the organization which primarily serve to advance the career interests of the individual employee, whereas expressive network resources are seen as those relationship ties with co-workers that serve to provide psycho-social support and feedback to the individual employee (Bozionelos and Wang, 2006). Despite a growing interest in the topic of intra-organizational “guanxi” or network resources in the literature limited empirical work has been conducted on the processes by which intra-organizational network resources influence employee turnover intentions in the Chinese context.

Previous research stresses the importance to organizations of developing environments in which their employees are able to establish and maintain supportive relationships with other members of the organization (Ensher et al., 2001; Chiaburu and Harrison, 2008; Self et al., 2008;). Organizations are increasingly developing collegial support schemes within the workplace to allow individuals to develop their intra-organizational network resources (Raabe and Beehr, 2003). Such schemes contribute to the development of group interdependence and harmony within the organization, which should theoretically result in better organizational outcomes. On the basis of the existing literature we might expect that the greater the network

resources possessed by an individual employee the more they should feel supported by other members of the organization (Ensher et al., 2001; Chiaburu and Harrison, 2008; Bozionelos, 2008; Self et al., 2008). This should increase POS to the extent that this treatment is attributable to the organization. In turn POS, as previously hypothesised, should reduce turnover intentions through higher levels of affective commitment towards the organization.

A direct relationship between network resources and turnover intentions is also hypothesised due to the fact that the Chinese have been shown to view their co-workers as separate commitment foci from that of the organization in previous research (Chan et al., 2006).

This leads us to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: POS mediates the relationship between expressive network resources and TI

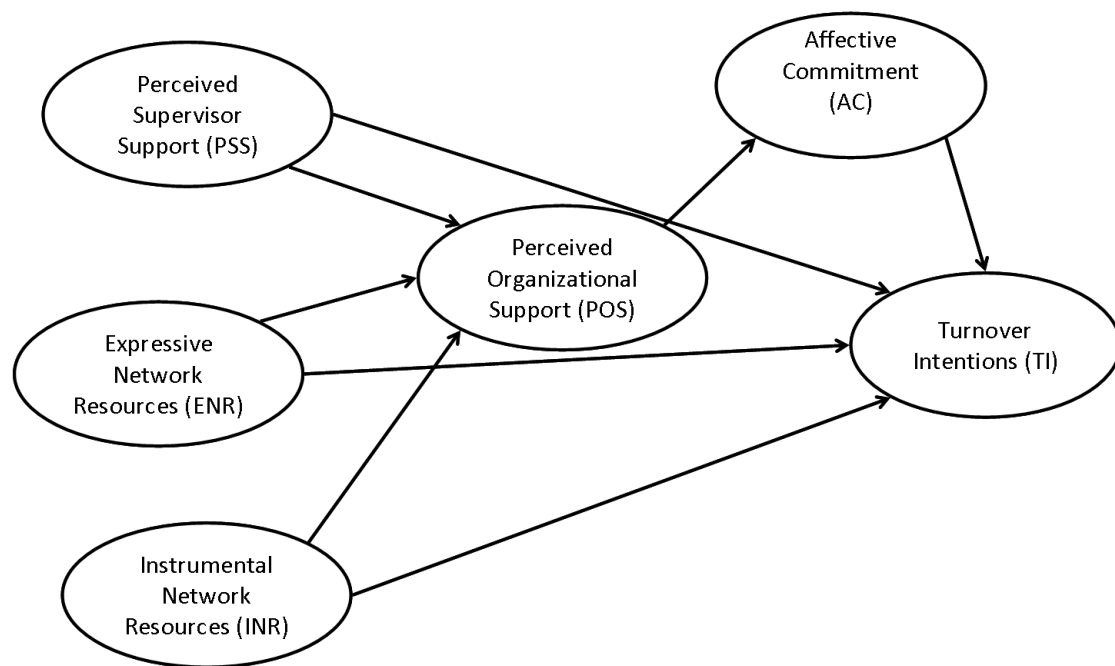
Hypothesis 3b: POS mediates the relationship between instrumental network resources and TI

Hypothesis 3c: Expressive network resources is positively related to TI

Hypothesis 3d: Instrumental network resources is positively related to TI

Figure 1 shows the proposed research model.

Figure 1- Proposed Model

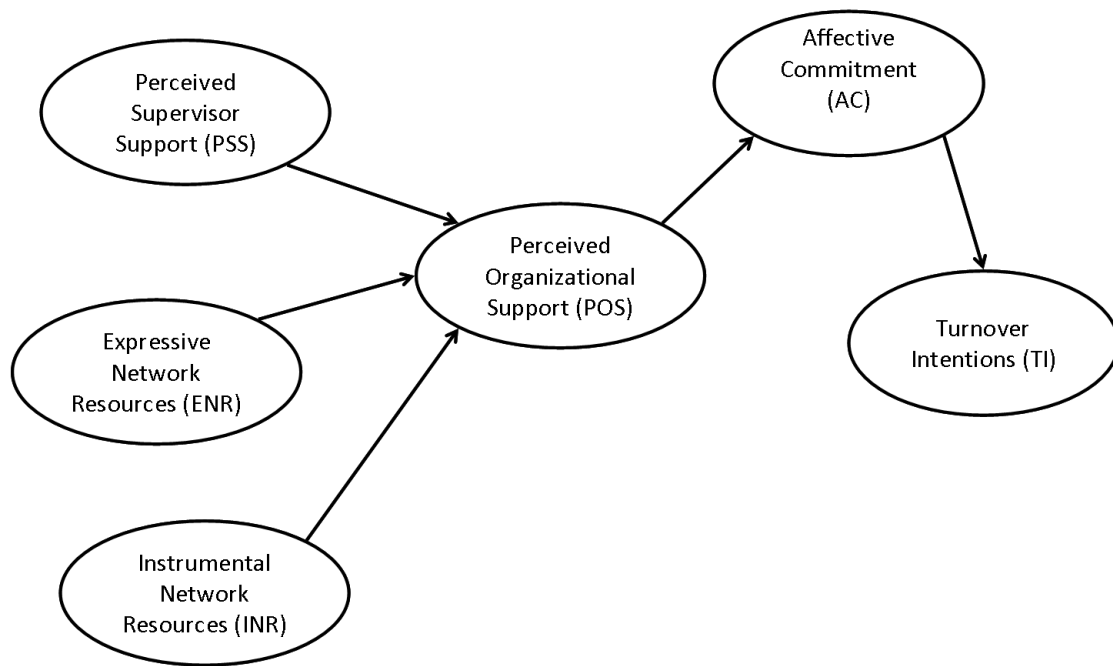


### Development of an Alternative Theoretical Model

In the previous model we hypothesise that the relationships between both PSS and intra-organizational network resources, and turnover intentions might be mediated by POS as well as having direct effects. However, we also test a plausible alternative model where no direct paths between these variables and turnover intentions are included.



Figure 2- Alternative Model



## Methods

### Sample and Procedures

The field research was conducted over a two month period from June to August 2008. Our sample consisted of 1000 Chinese employees from five multinational organizations operating in the Chinese service sector. Table 1 provides information on each of the organisations participating in the research and the fieldwork locations.

**Table 1: Company Information**

Company	Industry	Head Office	Fieldwork Locations	Total Distributed	Total Complete Responses
A	Retail	Shanghai	Nationwide	500	215
B	Retail	Shanghai	Nationwide	200	95
C	Banking	Beijing	Zhejiang Province	100	59
D	Education	Zhejiang Province	Zhejiang Province	100	37
E	Airline	Shanghai	Zhejiang Province	100	31

A six-page survey questionnaire in Chinese was utilised as the survey instrument. This questionnaire was translated from English using the back translation procedure recommended by Brislin (1993). This procedure has been adopted in numerous surveys involving cross-cultural research (Chen et al., 2005).

The human resource department in each organization randomly selected participants from their employee lists and invited them to participate in our research. All participants were fulltime employees, performing a managerial or administrative role within the organization.

Both internet and paper based surveys were utilised in this research. Three organizations opted to distribute surveys via the internet and two organizations in paper format. To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of employees, the surveys were returned directly to the researchers through a direct internet link that was provided to online participants and by stamped-addressed envelopes for the remainder of participants. Complete surveys were returned by 437 participants, giving a response rate of 43.7 per cent. The average age of respondents was around 30 years and around 64.5 per cent were female. The average tenure of respondents was approximately 4 years.

## **Measures**

All the constructs included in the analysis were assessed with perceptual self report measures based on multi-item scales whose psychometric properties are well established. Responses to all items were made on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree).

### *Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)*

Five items from House (1981) were used to measure perceived supervisor support. A sample item is “My supervisor is willing to listen to my work-related problems”. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.896.

### *Expressive and Instrumental Network Resources (ENR and INR)*

Expressive and instrumental network resources were measured by two three-item scales taken from Bozionelos (2003). These scales have been validated by previous studies in the Chinese context (Bozionelos and Wang, 2006). Items used to measure expressive network resources include ‘There are individuals in the organization with whom I share emotional support, feedback and work confirmation’ and instrumental network resources ‘I personally know a number of people who occupy important posts in the organization’. The alpha coefficients for these scales were 0.708 and 0.775.

### *Perceived Organizational Support (POS)*

This study used eight items from the scale developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) to measure POS. Empirical studies surveying many organizations and industries provide evidence for the high internal consistency of this scale (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986, 1990; Shore and Tetrick, 1991; Shore and Wayne, 1993). Sample items include, ‘My organization really cares about my well-being’ and ‘Help is available from my organization when I have a problem’. The alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.934.

### *Affective Commitment (AC)*

Four items from Meyer *et al.* (1993) were used to measure affective commitment. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.802.

### *Turnover Intentions (TI)*

Turnover intentions were measured using a four-item scale developed by Farh *et al.* (1998). This scale has been validated in other studies in the Chinese context (Chen and Francesco, 2000). Items included ‘I may leave this company and work for another company in the next year’ and ‘I plan to stay in this company to develop my career for a long time’. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.867.

### Analysis

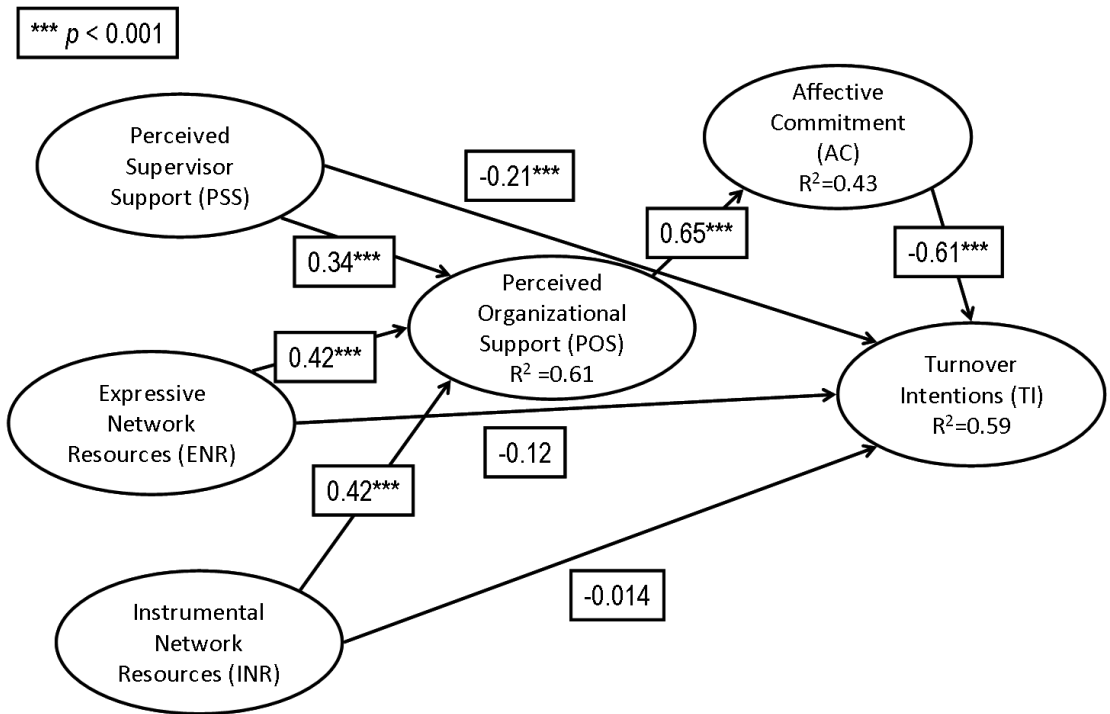
A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using LISREL 8.80 to examine the construct validity of the six scales used in our study (Joreskog and Sorbom, 2001). The measurement model indicated a good fit to the data (GFI = 0.89, NNFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.98, IFI = 0.98 RMSEA = 0.055). The means, standard deviations and correlations for each of the survey variables are provided in Table 2. The composite reliability estimates for each scale are above the recommended 0.7.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations amongst Study Variables**

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived supervisor support	3.82	0.69	1.00					
2. Expressive network resources	3.63	0.62	0.45	1.00				
3. Instrumental network resources	3.06	0.76	0.30	0.38	1.00			
4. Perceived organizational support	3.06	0.75	0.56	0.51	0.55	1.00		
5. Affective commitment	3.17	0.72	0.42	0.39	0.34	0.60	1.00	
6. Turnover intentions	2.73	0.76	-0.47	-0.38	-0.29	-0.59	-0.63	1.00

Structured equation modelling with LISREL 8.80 was utilised to test the proposed and alternative models. The results for the proposed model are shown in Figure 3. The goodness of fit statistics for the proposed model which hypothesises direct as well as mediated effects of PSS and inter-organizational network resources on turnover intentions can be seen in Table 3. Overall, the proposed model shows reasonable explanatory power for POS, affective commitment, and turnover intentions, accounting for 61%, 43%, and 59% of the variance, respectively. All hypothesized relationships are supported except for hypotheses 3c and 3d.

Figure 3- Results for Proposed Model

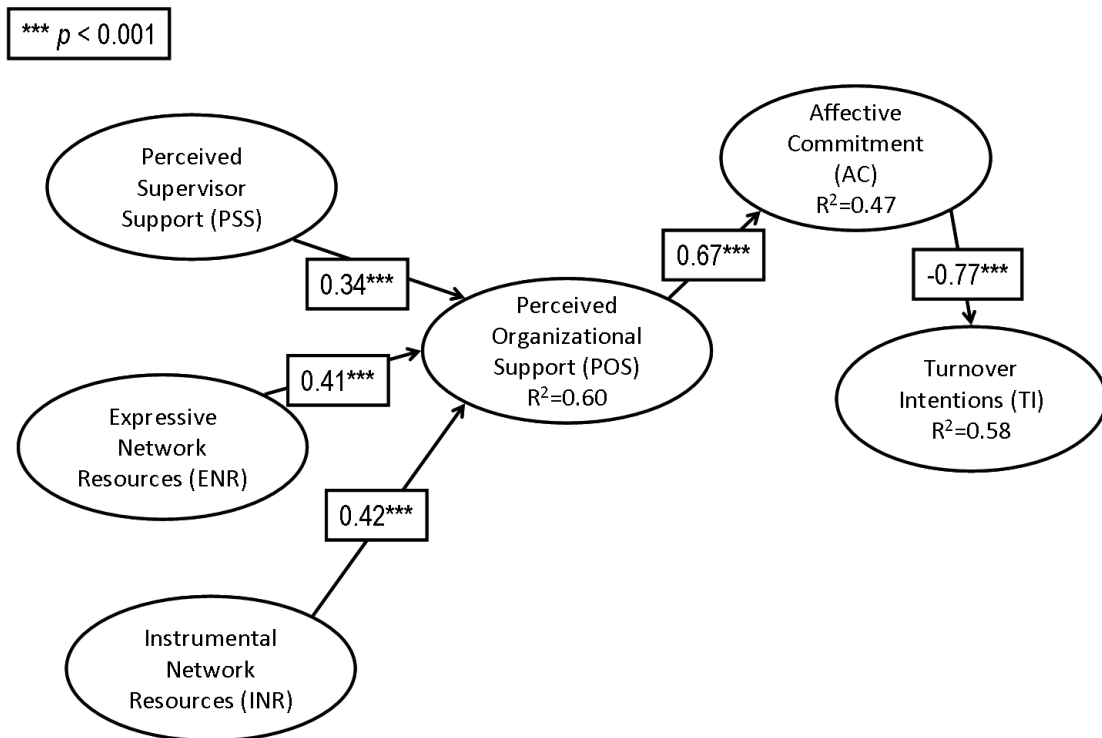


**Table 3: Model Fit Statistics for Proposed Model**

Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.89
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.87
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.055
$\chi^2$	693.85
$\chi^2/\text{df}$	2.22
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.98
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.98
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.98
Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC)	852.89

This model was compared to the alternative model where direct links between PSS and inter-organizational network resources with turnover intentions were not included. The results for the alternative model are shown in Figure 3 and the goodness-of-fit statistics can be seen in table 4. The results of our analysis, referring to the Akaike's information criterion, indicate that the proposed rather than the alternative model marginally fits the data better. However, only the path between PSS and turnover intentions was found to be significant.

Figure 4- Results for Alternative Model



**Table 4: Model Fit Statistics for Alternative Model**

Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.89
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.86
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.056
$\chi^2$	722.39
$\chi^2/\text{df}$	2.29
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.98
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.98
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.98
Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC)	875.23

To improve the model fit, the path from both measures of inter-organizational network resources to turnover intentions was removed from the model. The test results for the final model are shown in Figure 5 and the model fit statistics can be seen in Table 5. We provide the model fit statistics in Table 3. The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is higher than 0.85, the common cut-off for an adequate model fit. The RMSEA is less than 0.08, indicating an adequate model fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). The CFI, NNFI and IFI are all greater than 0.90, the commonly suggested

benchmark of a good fit. Collectively, these fit indices indicate a good fit of our model to the data.

Figure 5: Results for Final Model

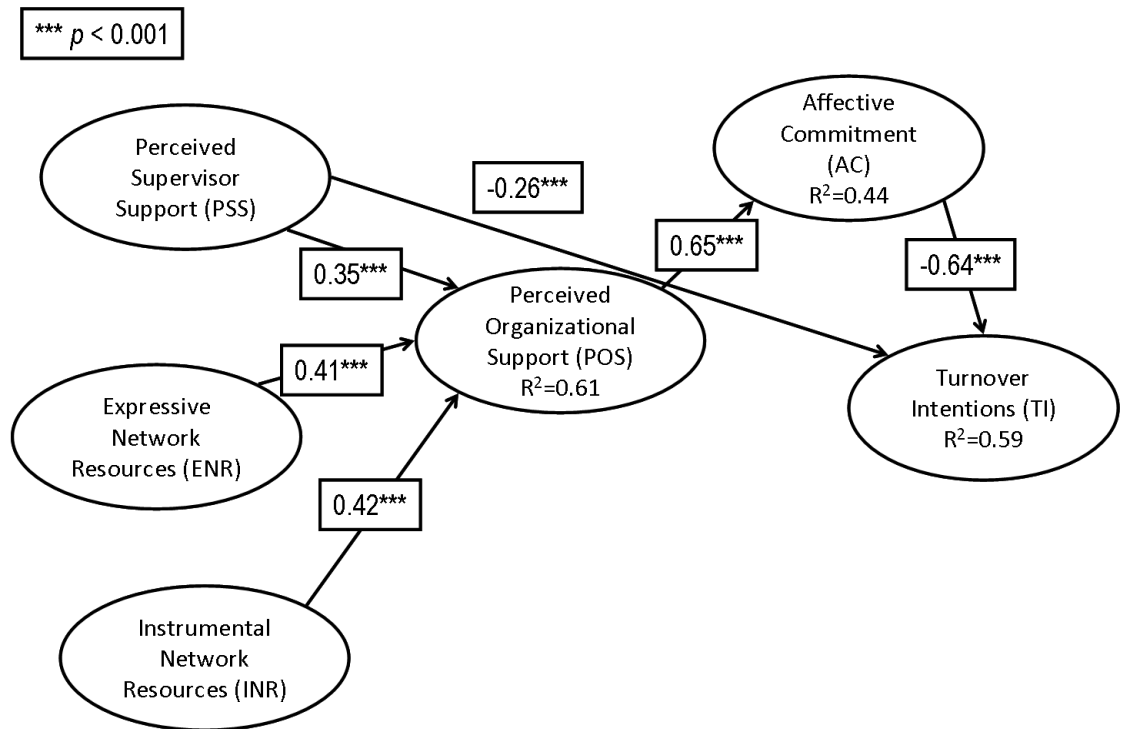


Table 5: Model Fit Statistics for Final Model

Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.89
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.87
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.055
$\chi^2$	696.64
$\chi^2/\text{df}$	2.21
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.98
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.98
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.98
Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC)	851.70

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between different types of work-related support and the turnover intentions of employees from five multinational organizations operating in China.

Firstly, the relationship between POS, affective commitment and turnover intentions was examined. Affective commitment was found to significantly mediate the

relationship between POS and turnover intentions. This is consistent with the argument that POS creates obligations on the part of the employee to reciprocate by remaining with the organization, which in turn, leads to lower turnover intentions. Our findings are consistent with previous work in the West (Wayne et al., 1997; Rhoades et al., 2001; Maertz et al., 2007) and empirical studies in Chinese organizational settings which highlight a significant relationship between POS and a whole host of positive organizational outcomes (Chen et al., 2002; Chan et al., 2006).

Secondly, our findings demonstrate a direct relationship between PSS and turnover intentions as well as a mediated relationship through POS. This is consistent with the findings of previous work in Western settings (Maertz et al., 2007), providing further support for the proposition that employees form attachments and attitudes towards their supervisors which are distinct from those they form towards the organization as a whole. Put simply, supervisors act both as agents of the organization, as well as independently, when providing support to their subordinates. Our findings highlight that supervisory support is as important, if not more important, in the Chinese organizational context than it is in the West. This may be due to the fact that Chinese culture fosters a strong vertical linkage between supervisors and subordinates (Redding, 1990; Cheng et al., 2003).

Thirdly, this research study confirms that the relationship between both expressive and instrumental network resources and turnover intentions is fully mediated by POS, suggesting that employees who possess greater intra-organizational network resources feel more supported by their organization. Contrary to what was expected no evidence of a direct relationship between intra-organizational network resources and turnover intentions was established. This is inconsistent with the findings of Chan et al. (2006) who argue that Chinese employees see co-workers as separate commitment foci from their organization. The findings of the present study may result from the fact that individuals view resources provided, which may include psychosocial and other forms of support by their co-workers, as coming from the organization itself.

This research study has important managerial implications for multinational organizations operating in the Chinese market, in terms of improving employee commitment and reduced turnover. Firstly, these findings demonstrate that organizations can increase the organizational commitment and reduce the turnover intentions of their employees by increasing their POS and PSS. In order to promote employee retention, organizations could start by increasing the provision of visible support on offer to their employees which may include childcare provision, recreation facilities and flexible working arrangements. However, such provision should be tailored to the needs of the individual employee as this has been shown to lead to improved employee retention (Rhoades et al., 2001; Maertz et al., 2007). Providing support should be carefully targeted to ensure organizational resources are not wasted and employee commitment is maximised.

Improving supervisor support is a relatively inexpensive and practical measure compared to the costly alternatives such as improving employee compensation, training and career development. Organizations should encourage their supervisors to be more active in promoting themselves as major source of support in the organization, which would in turn lead to both improved POS and reduce turnover intentions directly. For instance, supervisors might be encouraged to have regular meetings with their subordinates to inquire what forms of practical support may be provided from the organization to help individuals perform better in their job.

However, improving supervisor support might in some cases be detrimental towards the organization when it results in the strong attachment of employees to a supervisor,

as distinct from the organization. In this situation, employee turnover might actually increase when a highly supportive supervisor leaves the organization (Maertz et al., 2003). Organizations should consider what can be done to reward and retain supervisors who are supportive, and able to promote the organization as being supportive.

Organizations should also consider the role played by co-worker support in increasing POS and reducing turnover intentions amongst their employees. The research findings indicate a negative relationship between the intra-organizational network resources possessed by an individual and their intention to turnover, mediated through POS. In order to improve employee retention organizations should consider improving co-worker support schemes in the workplace, such as the encouragement of informal mentoring, which enable individuals to build up their network resources. Organizations may also try to develop a corporate culture where interaction between colleagues at different levels and from different departments is the norm. This may be done by organising away days where employees from different departments are able to interact freely, and by encouraging employees to mix socially outside of work, for example through the formation of company sports teams. In the long-run improving co-worker support, theoretically, may be a better method of retaining employees than by improving supervisor support. If a co-worker leaves the organization it should not impact on the POS of an employee to the same extent as when a supervisor leaves, as their network resources are only marginally affected. Future research may test this assertion empirically, by conducting longitudinal studies on the long-term impact of supervisor versus co-worker support on POS and turnover intentions.

### **Study limitations and future research**

This research study suffered from two main limitations. Firstly, the findings of this research are only generalizable to similar populations throughout China i.e. the employees of multinational enterprises operating in the Chinese service sector. In order to generalise these findings to different populations in China similar research would need to be replicated in different organizational and industrial settings.

The second limitation of this study arose from the cross sectional design of the study. The lack of objective measures such as actual turnover at a future point in time means it is difficult to assess causality with the data collected. However, the fact that previous literature demonstrates that turnover intentions are strongly related to actual turnover behaviour greatly mitigates our concerns about such issues.

Despite these limitations this study filled a gap in the literature by examining the nature of the relationship between work-related support and turnover intentions in the Chinese context. Our research confirmed the results of previous studies in the US context regarding the effects of PSS and POS on turnover intentions (Maertz et al., 2007). In addition this was the first study to examine the effects of network resources on turnover intentions. It was established that POS fully, rather than partially mediated the relationship between network resources and turnover intentions suggesting that employees attribute instrumental and expressive support from others in the organization as coming from the organization itself.



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